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SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 30 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith a letter dated 30 October 1998 written to you by the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Ariel Sharon (see annex).

Foreign Affairs Minister Sharon addressed the above-mentioned letter to you immediately after the signing of the historic Wye River Memorandum, whose contents are reflected herein, which sets down the precise manner and conditions under which Israel and the Palestinians are to proceed on the road to peace.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dore GOLD
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Letter dated 30 October 1998 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Israel to the Secretary-General

This is my first letter to you as Foreign Minister and it is being sent almost immediately after the successful conclusion of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians at the Wye Plantation, Maryland. These negotiations testify to the seriousness of Israel's desire to achieve peace with the Palestinians, and to our steadfast determination to see this process through.

As someone deeply involved in the defence of Israel since my youth, I have seen first-hand the terrible destruction that war wreaks upon combatants, families and nations. I can therefore state that the hardest and most hotly contested negotiations are still infinitely preferable to the easiest of military victories. May I assure you that all Israelis fervently hope that this agreement will hasten the achievement of a full and lasting peace in our region.

As the agreement signed by the two sides has tremendous import for the continuation of the peace process, I therefore wish to take this opportunity to apprise you of some of the more salient points contained in the Wye River Memorandum.

Israel has undertaken, inter alia, the following concrete commitments as a result of the negotiations:

(a) The transfer of land in Judea and Samaria, which will result in the Palestinian Authority's controlling some 40 per cent of the land in Judea and Samaria (areas A and B), and exercising its jurisdiction over 98 per cent of the Palestinian inhabitants;

(b) The release of Palestinian prisoners incarcerated in Israel, before the expiration of their sentences;

(c) Agreement on the arrangements that will permit the opening of the Gaza Industrial Estate (at Karni);

(d) The conclusion of a protocol on the opening of the international airport in Gaza;

(e) Agreement to renew negotiations on the "safe passage" of goods and people between Gaza and Judea and Samaria with the intention to conclude an agreement within a week of the Wye River Memorandum's entering into force.

I must note that Israel has taken considerable risks in making the commitments, but we have not done so unilaterally. Rather, they are conditional upon the Palestinian side's in turn scrupulously abiding by its obligations, which are, inter alia:

(a) Zero tolerance for terror and violence and the implementation of a work plan to ensure the systematic and effective combat of terrorist

organizations and their infrastructures. A major component of this security plan is the apprehension of specific individuals suspected of perpetrating acts of violence and terror, for the purpose of further investigation and prosecution;

(b) The criminalization of unlicensed weapons, and their collection and appropriate handling;

(c) A reduction in the numbers of the Palestinian police, as per previous agreements;

(d) The bringing to fruition of the process by which the Palestinian National Covenant is to be annulled, by the convening of the members of the Palestine National Council, as well as the representatives of other Palestinian organizations for this purpose;

(e) An end to incitement to violence in the Palestinian media. This matter will be monitored by a United States of America-Israel-Palestinian committee.

This agreement must not be allowed to exist in a vacuum - it must be utilized to reinvigorate the peace process. To that end, we anticipate:

(a) The reconvening of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel and Lebanon;

(b) The full reconvening of the multilateral track;

(c) The strengthening of "people-to-people" programmes in order to engender grass-roots support for the peace process and encourage reconciliation;

(d) An end to the denigration of Israel in international forums, including the United Nations General Assembly presently meeting in New York.

Following the Wye River Memorandum, Israel expects that the General Assembly will not put forth resolutions that prejudge the outcome of the final status negotiations, including the issue of statehood. Moreover, I would like to express our view that anachronistic and outdated resolutions recycled and readopted by the Assembly year after year, which no longer reflect present realities and achievements, should be finally removed from the annual agenda and relegated to the legacy of the past. Such resolutions only detract from the process of negotiations.

In this context, I would like to state that Israel's exclusion from any regional grouping in the United Nations system has deprived it of its right to be a full participant in all United Nations bodies, including the Security Council. This situation constitutes a clear violation of the principle of sovereign equality of Member States embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. During your last visit to Israel, when speaking before the Israel Council on Foreign Relations in Jerusalem, on 25 March 1998, you stated:

"I believe it is time to usher in a new era of relations between Israel and the United Nations ... One way to write the new chapter would be to rectify an anomaly - Israel's position as the only Member State that is not a member of one of the regional groupings, which means it has no chance of being elected to serve on main organs such as the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council. This anomaly should be corrected. We must uphold the principle of equality among all States Members of the United Nations."

As you know, Israel cannot join its natural regional group in Asia, owing to the objection of certain members. As a result, Israel is seeking a way of gaining membership, at least temporarily, in another group. While Israel's quest for full participation in the United Nations system stands on its own merits, the signing of the Wye Memorandum serves as an opportunity for Israel to redouble its efforts to solve this problem. It is our hope that you will continue to support Israel in this regard.

It was on the eve of these negotiations that I was appointed to the helm of Israel's diplomacy. Most of my adult life has been dedicated to the defence of Israel and ensuring its vitality and prosperity. In this respect, my present position reflects a continuation of many ongoing themes that have characterized my professional endeavours. As I now lead Israel into negotiations with the Palestinians with a permanent status, I want to reassure you of my personal commitment to seeing these negotiations through, for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the region.

(Signed) Ariel SHARON
Minister of Foreign Affairs